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Weekly Highlights & Hot Bites, #13

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Approved by:

Chad R. Russell

U.S. Embassy, FASNEWDELHI

Prepared by:

A. Govindan, V. Shunmugam

Report Highlights:

Rasi seeds receives nod for cultivation of Bt cotton, *Grain export set to get subsidy booster*, *Mahyco working on GM rice and vegetables*, *Supreme Court moved for law on GM seeds import*.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
New Delhi [IN1]
[IN]

Welcome to Hot Bites from India, a weekly summary of issues of interest to the U.S. agricultural community. The report includes information that has been garnered during travel within India, reported in the local media, or offered by host country officials and agricultural analysts. Press articles are included in this report. Significant issues will be expanded upon in subsequent reports from this office.

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RASI SEEDS RECEIVES NOD FOR CULTIVATION OF BT COTTON

The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of India had recently approved another Bt cotton variety, RCH 2, developed by Rasi Seeds for commercial cultivation in five central and southern states for a period of three years. GEAC also gave permission to Rasi Seeds to conduct large-scale field trials for its transgenic cotton varieties developed for cultivation in northern India. So far, the GEAC has not approved any Bt cotton varieties for commercial cultivation in north India. (Source: The Financial Express 4/5/04)

GRAIN EXPORT SET TO GET SUBSIDY BOOSTER

In a bid to revive grain exports and to facilitate direct private procurement for exports, an inter-ministerial committee has worked out a WTO compatible scheme for reimbursing around rs. 1200 (\$27) per metric ton on exports of wheat and rice. "The reimbursement scheme for wheat-rice exports is almost ready, though the specific date to begin operationalization is yet to be decided," according to official sources. Actual implementation of the scheme before the polls may be difficult, the official said. (Economic Times, 04/07/04)

MAHYCO WORKING ON GM RICE AND VEGETABLES

Mr. Raju Barwale, Managing Director, Mahyco (a leading Indian seed company) stated that his firm is working on several transgenic crops including rice, tomato, aubergine, cabbage, and cotton. He said that his company has been using Monsanto gene technology to develop several other genetically modified hybrids, which are passing through various stages of development. His company would conduct more field trials this year for a new cotton hybrid suitable for north India.

Monsanto-Mahyco, a joint venture between Monsanto Inc. and Mahyco had commissioned a study on the Bt cotton farming in the six states where Bt cotton cultivation is officially approved. The study showed that Bt cotton hybrids produced 30 percent higher yields compared to traditional varieties, a 60 percent reduction in pesticide use, and a 78 percent increase in profits. (Source: Business Standard 4/7/04)

Post comment: A brief summary of the above mentioned study is available at: http://www.monsantoindia.com/acn_press.pdf.

SUPREME COURT MOVED FOR LAW ON GM SEEDS IMPORT

Gene Campaign, an NGO, filed a public interest litigation claiming that there are no regulations governing the import of transgenic seeds into India. It alleges that India is used as a dumping ground or as a place to conduct experimental trials for inadequately tested transgenics, which may prove disastrous to the country's bio-diversity/eco-system. The NGO further alleges that the absence of a law to regulate the entry of genetically modified seeds into India would spell doom for staple food crops, such as rice and wheat. Consequently, the Supreme Court has sought an explanation from the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment

and Forests, and Science and Technology to explain their position on this petition. (Source: Business Standard 4/6/04)

Post comment: **Rules for the manufacture, use, import, export and storage of hazardous micro organisms, genetically engineered organisms or cells, 1989** notified under the Environmental Protection Act, 1986, and the recently notified **Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order, 2003**, have provisions to check illegal imports of transgenic seeds into the country.

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| REPORT # | SUBJECT | DATE SUBMITTED |
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| IN4031 | Weekly Highlights & Hot Bites, #12 | 04/05/04 |
| IN4032 | FAIRS Product Specific – Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) (2 nd Amend.) Order, 2004 | 04/05/04 |

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